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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: EDO COMMISSIONER FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT  
AFFAIRS OUTLINES GOVERNOR OSUNBOR'S PRIORITIES

11. (SBU) Summary: The Peoples' Democratic Party (PDP) Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs of Edo State, Austine Momodu, told PolOffs October 24 that the priorities of Governor Oserheimen Osunbor (PDP) included building roads, rehabilitating hospitals and building police barracks. Momodu stressed that people fleeing violence in the Niger Delta have moved to Edo State where there is no militancy; consequently crime in the State is increasing. Momodu denied attacks by the military Joint Task Force (JTF) against communities in the State. The Osunbor government is under intense pressure to produce tangible gains for the electorate as it awaits the outcome of its appeal of the election tribunal's declaration that the Action Congress candidate, Adams Oshiomhole, won the 2007 gubernatorial election. End Summary.

12. (SBU) The Commissioner for Local Government and Chieftaincy Affairs of Edo State, Austine Momodu, told PolOffs on October 24 that Governor Oserheimen Osunbor has made the construction of passable roads his top priority since taking office. Momodu stressed the deplorable condition in which the present government found the roads, noting that a particular problem had been clogged drainage systems which caused the roads to flood extensively during the long rainy season. (Note: the previous administration of Governor Lucky Igbinedion also belonged to the PDP. End Note) The Osunbor government selected key road projects in each of the three senatorial districts in the state.

13. (SBU) The second priority of the government is hospital rehabilitation. The unreliability of electric power is a major problem, which is why the Edo State government is working to ensure that all hospitals have their own generators. Momodu noted that many doctors drawing salaries at state hospitals were in fact working in private practice and had to be induced to return to their jobs. He also mentioned the need to equip hospitals properly, although he gave us no specifics as to what, if anything, the Governor was doing in this regard.

14. (SBU) The construction or rehabilitation of police barracks is a third priority in the state. Every single LGA was tasked with ensuring, either by building new facilities or renovating existing facilities, that police housing in their jurisdiction is adequate. (Note: Absence of adequate police housing is a nationwide problem having significant impact on police morale. End note)

15. (SBU) Turning to education, Momodu admitted that many primary schools in the State lack even chairs. Primary

schools are under the jurisdiction of the Local Government Areas, but these work closely with the state Ministry of Education, Momodu alleged. The state also carries out monthly inspections of the schools, he said, and offered to allow PolOfs on their next visit to go along on the inspections.

¶6. (SBU) Asked about potable water in Edo State, Momodu noted that there had been many water projects in the State over the years, but most of these had broken down due to insufficient maintenance. However, the State has identified key projects which warrant re-habilitation. A Chinese firm has been contracted to carry out this work.

¶7. (SBU) PolOfs asked about press reports that ethnic Ijaw communities in Edo State had been attacked by the JTF and "wiped out." Momodu sharply denied the truth of these reports, stressing that he, as Commissioner for Local Government Affairs, would certainly have heard about any such cases.

¶8. (SBU) Comment: The Osunbor government is under great pressure to produce tangible results as it awaits the decision by the court on the governor's appeal of the declaration by the elections tribunal that Action Congress candidate Adams Osiomhole won the 2007 gubernatorial elections. Clinging to power as a result of the appeal, Osunbor has undoubtedly done some if not all of what his commissioner claims.

¶9. (U) This cable was cleared by Abuja.

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BLAIR